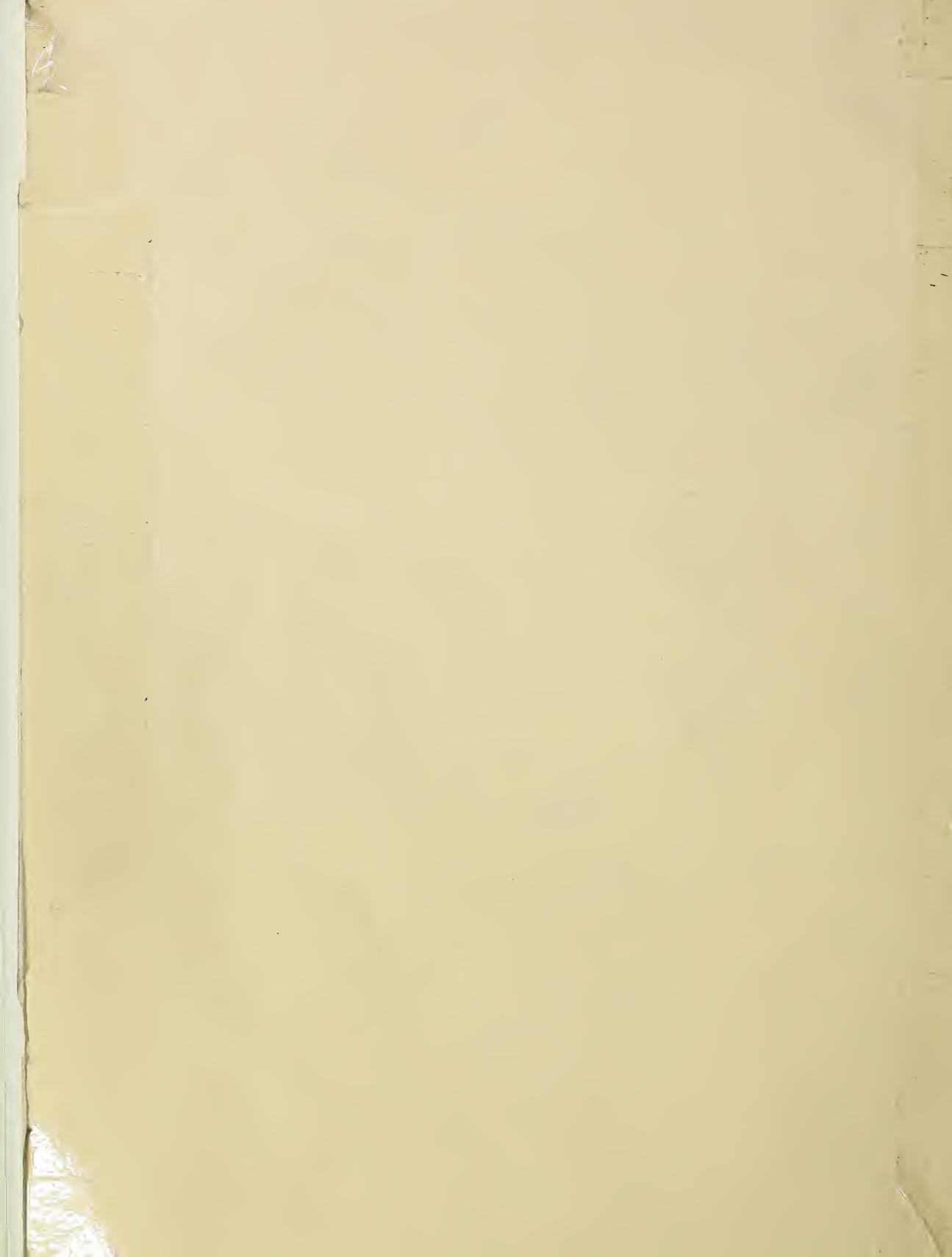


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FOOD NEWS

FOR CONSUMERS

Volume 7 Number 3 Holidays 1990

JULY 17 '90 U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service



A Procrastinator's Guide to a Safe Thanksgiving

FOOD NEWS

FOR CONSUMERS

Holidays 1990
Vol. 7, No. 3

Food News for Consumers is published by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, the agency charged with ensuring the safety, wholesomeness and proper labeling of the nation's meat and poultry supply. The magazine reports how FSIS acts to protect public safety, covering research findings and regulatory efforts important in understanding how the agency works and how consumers can protect themselves against foodborne illness.

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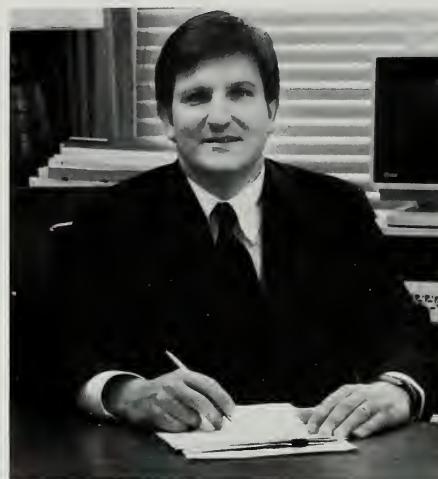
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Looking Ahead in Food Safety

A Message from FSIS's Information Director David B. Schmidt



Mr. Schmidt, whose background is in marketing and sales management in the food industry, first joined USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service as deputy director of Legislative Affairs. He assumed his present position as director of Information and Legislative Affairs in 1989. The Food Safety and Inspection Service handles meat and poultry inspection and consumer education on food safety.

We have many reasons to be thankful this holiday season, not the least of which is that, as Americans, we enjoy an agricultural system that provides us with a bountiful food supply that is among the safest in the world.

Ensuring the safety and proper use of the nation's food supply, however, requires continuing attention. *Food News* magazine is part of that effort. In these pages, we keep the public informed not only about how to protect themselves from foodborne illness, but also about how USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is carrying out its governmental mandate to provide safe food.

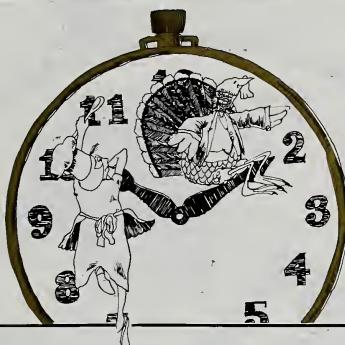
Your work as educators and media representatives is also vital in this information effort. I've been impressed in my time here with the fine efforts most reporters and commentators make in presenting a balanced view of often complex food issues.

Unfortunately, I can't tell you that these issues are going to get any easier. In fact, as I look over the top of my desk calendar into the 1990s, I see a multitude of challenging issues just ahead. To name a few, FSIS will be involved in setting new standards for accurate, more informative nutritional labels for meat and poultry products, new efforts in foodborne bacterial control, residue control and a continuing review of how meat and poultry inspection can be improved.

In other words, 1991 will be a year to "stay tuned." Why? The National Academy of Sciences is releasing a report that will guide federal efforts in product labeling reform. The Winter "science" issue of *Food News* will outline recent progress in bacterial control and in the development of the forward-looking Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system we're now fine-tuning to prevent public health problems right on the production line in meat and poultry plants.

Next year will be exciting and important for food safety policy. Meanwhile, Happy Holidays to all of you from all of us at the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

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Food Safety

"Unwrapping" Those Fancy Food Gifts

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Enforcement Actions

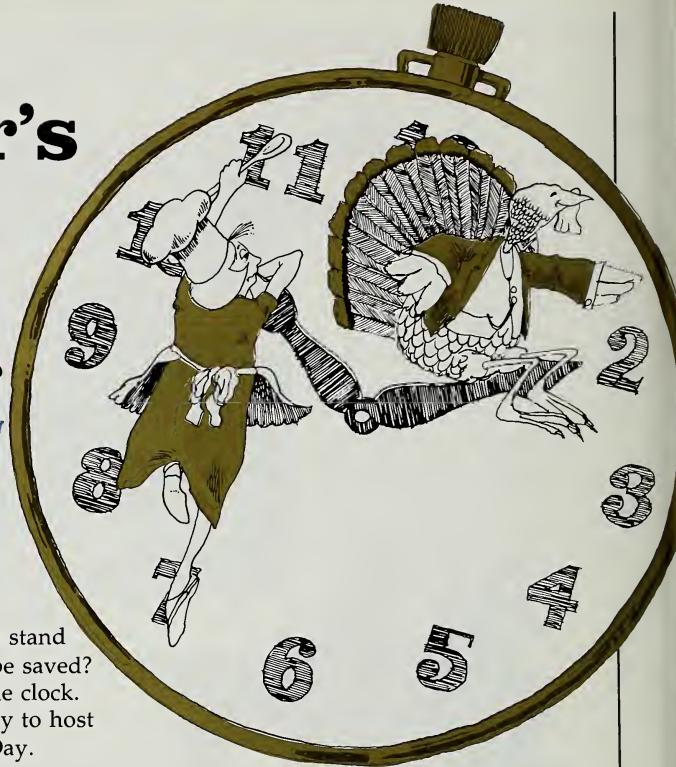
FSIS's responsibility for safe meat and poultry products extends beyond production. We seize, detain and recall faulty products to protect the public health. Recent examples p. 15

A Procrastinator's Guide to a Safe Thanksgiving

by Barbara O'Brien and Pat Moriarty

Wednesday morning. It's less than 24 hours before Thanksgiving and the clock is ticking. In other people's kitchens, roasting pans are cleaned and ready, turkeys are thawed, cranberries are chopped and pumpkin pies stand at attention. But you're just starting. Can this holiday be saved?

Yes. Here are some sure-fire, but safe ways to beat the clock. Follow this handy countdown, and you too can be ready to host a *safe* and delicious dinner by 3:30 p.m. Thanksgiving Day.



THE COUNTDOWN



WEDNESDAY — The Day Before Thanksgiving

8 A.M. Planning and Shopping

Keep your menu basic—roast turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, relish plate, hot vegetable, heat-and-serve rolls and pumpkin pie. Make your grocery list while reviewing your entire menu, including recipes, to be sure nothing is forgotten.

Plan on $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds of turkey per person. Is your roasting pan large enough? Do you have a meat thermometer? If you can find one, buy a fresh turkey to save thawing time. But don't worry if the only turkeys left in the supermarket are frozen. We'll proceed as if a frozen 20-pound bird is what you buy.

10 A.M. Thawing the Bird

Plan on about 30 minutes per pound to defrost your bird. Place the bird in its unopened bag in the sink and cover with cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes to ensure safe, but effective thawing.

1 P.M. Clean Vegetables

Clean and cut raw vegetables for relish platter. Refrigerate.

2 P.M. Prepare Stuffing Ingredients

Dry stuffing ingredients can be prepared and left, tightly covered, at room temperature. The perishables (margarine, mushrooms, oysters, sausage, cooked celery and onion, broth) should be refrigerated. Do not combine the wet and dry ingredients at this time. Immediately before the

turkey goes into the oven, combine the ingredients and stuff the bird.

3 P.M. Prepare Pumpkin Pie

For convenience, use a frozen pie crust and canned pumpkin mix. Use only clean, uncracked eggs that have been kept under constant refrigeration. Bake the pie until the center is set or a knife comes out clean. Cool pie for 20 minutes before refrigerating.

8 P.M. Clean the Bird

Remove the neck and giblets from the neck and/or body cavities. Wash the inside and outside of the turkey and the giblets in cold water and drain well.

Refrigerate the bird on a platter so raw juices from the bird don't drip on and contaminate other foods.

WASH hands, utensils, counter and sink that have come in contact with the raw turkey to prevent the spread of bacteria.

Avoid the temptation to roast your turkey all night at a low temperature. Cooking below 325° F is unsafe. Low-temperature cooking allows meat to remain too long at temperatures where bacteria can grow.



THURSDAY — Thanksgiving Day

8 A.M. Preheat Oven to 325° F
Combine stuffing ingredients.

8:15 A.M. Stuff the Bird

Stuff loosely. Bake extra stuffing in a pan. This ensures thorough cooking.

8:30 A.M. Put Turkey in a Shallow Roasting Pan

Place turkey breast-side up. Don't add water. You may want to brush the bird with cooking oil or melted margarine. Basting is usually not necessary during roasting. NOTE: Opening the door frequently just prolongs cooking time.

Insert a meat thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh muscle without touching the bone.

Cover the turkey with a loose tent of heavy-duty aluminum foil.

WASH hands, utensils, counter and sink after these preparations.

Place Turkey in Preheated Oven

These are estimated times for roasting a turkey:

UNSTUFFED—15 to 18 minutes per pound

STUFFED—18 to 24 minutes per pound

A 20-pound, stuffed turkey will take about 6½ hours to cook.

9 A.M. Prepare Side Dishes

Place canned cranberry sauce on serving platter. Arrange cleaned vegetables on relish tray. Cover and refrigerate both dishes.

2 P.M. Peel and Cook Potatoes

3 P.M. Mash Potatoes

Cooked mashed potatoes can be kept warm by placing the covered pot on a low burner. You can add milk or water to keep them moist.

Check Turkey for Doneness

The meat thermometer should register 180° F in the dark meat and the stuffing should reach 165° F. When a turkey is done, the juices run clear and the legs "wiggle" in the sockets. A turkey breast is done when the meat thermometer registers 170° F.



MORE Time-Savers

- Save 30-60 minutes of roasting time by using an oven cooking bag. Actual time saved depends on the size of your turkey.
- Save 2 hours by baking your stuffing in a separate pan. Why? A 20-pound unstuffed bird cooks in about 4½ hours versus 6½ hours if stuffed.
- Halve your cooking time (oven space permitting) with two 10-pound unstuffed birds versus one stuffed 20-pounder. Cuts cooking time from 6½ to 3½ hours.

Remove Turkey from Oven

Remove stuffing from turkey immediately. Place in covered serving bowl in warm oven—at least 200° F. Let turkey stand for 20 minutes before carving.

Now's the time to call in extra helping hands. "Cooking" guests can make the gravy and prepare the pumpkin pie for serving. Someone else can serve the vegetables simmering on the stove and the rolls warming in the oven. Youngsters can put the cranberry sauce and relish tray on the table.

3:30 P.M. Dinner's On . . . You Beat the Clock!

Just remember: Never leave perishable foods at room temperature over 2 hours. The turkey should be carved, served and leftovers refrigerated within two hours of removal from the oven.

4:30 P.M. Refrigerate Leftovers

When the meal is over, remove all meat from the bones. Store leftovers in small shallow containers. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days; gravy within 1-2 days, or freeze these foods.

Microwave Time-Savers

- Thaw a smaller turkey in the oven and cook immediately.
- Give your bird room to cook—3" clearance on top, 2-3" on the sides.
- Use an oven cooking bag for even heating.
- Rotate the turkey during cooking.
- Use 50% power, allowing 9 minutes per pound.
- Take turkey from oven when a thermometer shows 170-175° F in the dark meat. Check several spots. Let it stand outside oven until temperature reaches 180° F.
- Let turkey stand 20 minutes for easy carving.

245 “Unwrapping” Those Food Gifts

What's Really in the Package



by CiCi Williamson

Excitement! You rip into shiny foil to find a holiday delicacy—a smoked WHAT???

It's an exotic game bird with a notice on the label that says "Keep Refrigerated." Uh oh. It's been sitting in the living room at least a week.

Still, it is smoked. Will that make it safe to eat? You shove it in the refrigerator and look up a

magazine article with the number for USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline.

Alas, the Hotline says this lovely present should not be eaten.

It turns out a lot of people call the Hotline with food handling questions. According to Linda Burkholder, the Hotline management analyst who tracks consumer inquiries, "Last year, the Hotline answered nearly 3,000 food handling questions. It's a leading food safety concern."

Robert A. Savage, a food technologist with USDA's Processed Products division, explains the Hotline's verdict. "If a product is labeled 'Keep Refrigerated,' that's a warning that not all the bacteria have been inhibited or destroyed. Refrigeration is necessary to keep the food safe to eat."

Savage further explains that turkeys and hams and other meats are smoked for flavor, not preservation. Country hams are different. With their high salt

content and dryness, they are safe at room temperature. Bacteria can't grow on them.

Other gift foods—canned meats, vacuum-packed steaks, sausage and cheese assortments—may or may not need refrigeration depending on how they were processed.

"There are several ways to process meats," continues Savage. "Some canned meat products are heated to 250° F like vegetables and other canned goods. This effectively sterilizes them so they are shelf-stable. But some canned hams receive only a mild heat treatment after canning and therefore are not commercially sterile. These hams must be kept refrigerated."

"Vacuum packaging, while inhibiting the growth of spoilage bacteria, encourages other organisms like *Clostridium botulinum* that thrive in low-oxygen conditions. Vacuum-packed steaks are as perishable as raw chicken and should be treated the same," Savage says.

Some sausages and cheeses in gift assortments don't need refrigeration. They are shelf-stable due to brining, drying and, sometimes, additives.

"Additives together with drying and fermentation make a processed product shelf-stable," says food scientist Robert C. Post, a branch chief in USDA's Standards and Labeling division.

But many consumers calling the Hotline are confused about the role of additives. Burkholder says, "Some callers are concerned that additives make the food less safe. Actually, it's the additives plus the processing that make it safe."

Food additives are added to food in processing to prevent spoilage, protect flavor and help prevent foodborne illness. Some, like nitrates, have been used safely for thousands of years.

When people call the Hotline to ask about food additives, they often mention specific compounds.



Cans or Jars of Meat — Refrigerate if so labeled, otherwise shelf-stable 2-5 years. After opening, store in refrigerator up to a week.

Cheese, Processed or Hard — Safe at room temperature, but refrigeration prolongs quality.

"Cook-Before-Eating" Ham — Refrigerate up to 1 week. After cooking, refrigerate up to 5 days.

Country Ham — Shelf-stable 1 year if unsliced. Refrigerate 2 to 3 months if sliced. Once cooked, refrigerate 5-7 days.

To clear things up a bit, here are two charts. One defines some additives commonly used in popular meat and cheese products. The other, a storage chart, will guide your handling of holiday food gifts and help you manage food purchases year-round.

Food Gifts—How to Store Them, How Long They'll Last

Game Birds — Keep refrigerated up to 2 days raw or 4 days after cooking.

Sausage Labeled "Keep Refrigerated" — Store refrigerated up to 1 week.

Sausage, Hard/Dry — If unopened, can be kept in the cabinet 4-6 weeks, in the refrigerator 6 months. After opening, store up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator.

***FREEZER NOTE** — Frozen food stays safe indefinitely but may lose quality and flavor. **WARNING:** Don't freeze canned food. Expanding contents may burst seams causing leakage and rusting.

The Top Ten Meat & Cheese Additives

Nitrate/Nitrite — These natural salts inhibit the growth of *Clostridium botulinum* which causes botulism. They keep meat color bright and give a tangy flavor. USDA sets safe limits on amounts used.

Sodium Ascorbate/Erythorbate — Made from sugar and related to Vitamin C, they speed curing of meat and fix color. Their use is required in some products to prevent the formation of nitrosamines, cancer-causing substances.

MSG — The salt of an amino acid, found in soybeans, sugar beets and seaweed, MSG is a flavor enhancer. It appears in the ingredients list of any meat or poultry product in which it is used.

BHT/BHA — These synthetic substances prevent rancidity and off-flavors, retard deterioration and protect fat-soluble vitamins.

Starter Culture — These are harmless bacteria used for fermentation, to provide tangy flavor and to make products more acidic and bacteria resistant.

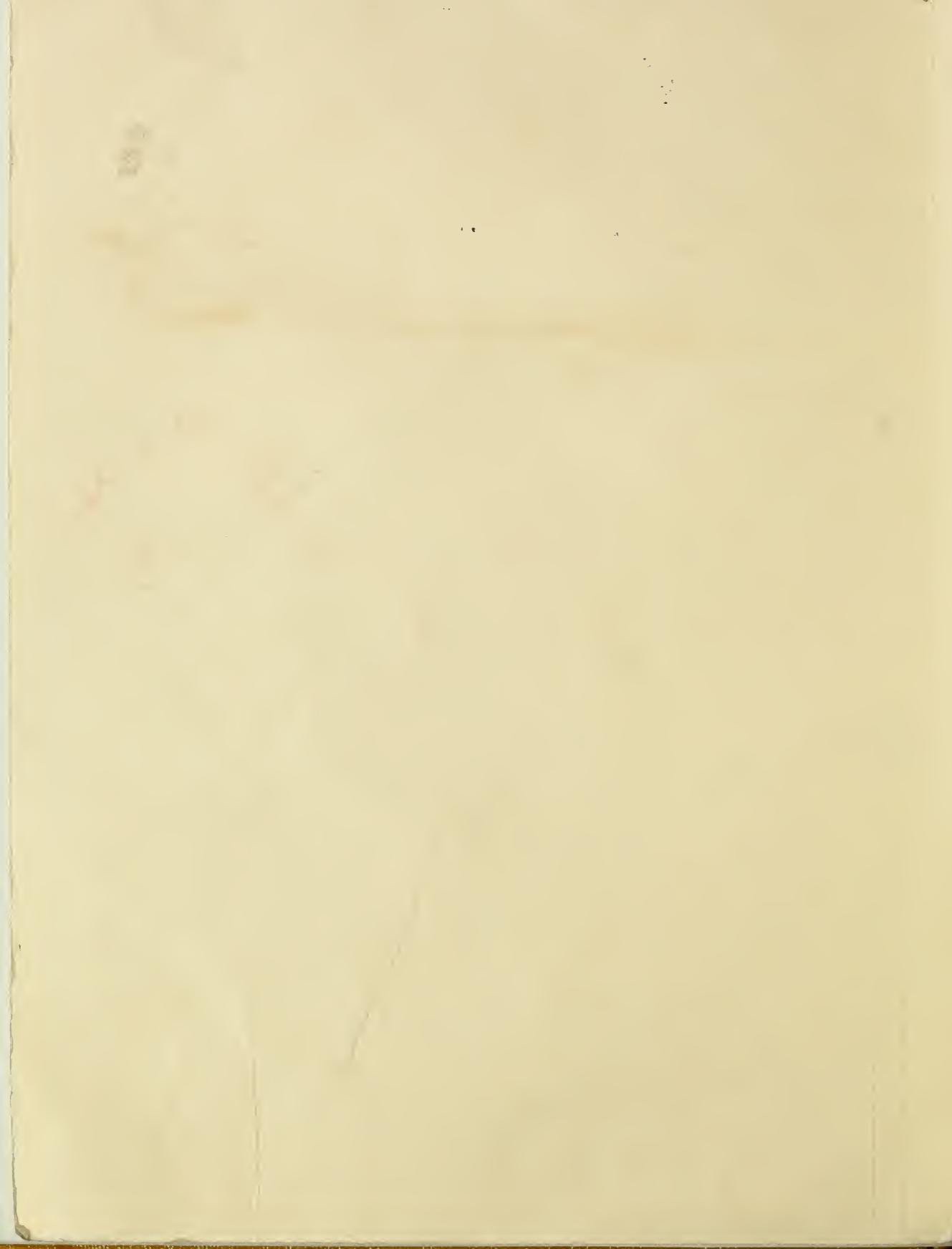
Mono/Di/Glycerides — Derived from fats, they help keep ingredients distributed and seasoning mixed.

Isolated Soy Protein — Extracted from soybeans, it binds meat and fat and improves texture.

Sodium Benzoate — This salt of an organic acid inhibits mold and is used as a preservative in cheese.

Lecithin — Substance in soybeans, corn or eggs that keeps fat and water distributed in meat and cheese.

Acetic, Citric or Lactic Acids — Made from fermented carbohydrates, they add tartness and maintain quality during storage.



For a Happy Holiday and Year-Round Food Safety, Follow These Guidelines

Shopping — Buy food in undamaged containers. Refrigerate perishables quickly.

Thực phẩm an-toàn,
theo những điều chỉ dẫn sau đây.

- Dịt chợ. — Mua thức ăn đựng trong hộp thi phải nhìn kỹ, cái hộp không bị hư bị bể ra hay bị phùng nắp lên.
Muốn tránh sự hư hỏng, dịt chợ mua về phải để ngay vào tủ lạnh.
- Nhà bếp. — Khi vào trong bếp, hãy giữ gìn hai tay và đồ dùng trong bếp được, sạch-sẽ để vi-trùng không bành trướng hay lan rộng ra từ thức ăn này đến thức ăn khác.
- Nấu ăn. — Nấu thức ăn với độ nóng-tủ 160° F hay là 70° C, để bảo vệ thức ăn khỏi sanh ra bệnh tật.
- Tủ lạnh. — Đừng bao giờ để thức ăn ngoài tủ lạnh (thì dù để trên bàn ăn) hơn 2 tiếng đồng hồ.
Sau các bữa ăn trong ngày, đồ ăn còn dư lại phải để vô hộp nhựa có nắp đậy và để ngay vào trong tủ lạnh.

Vietnamese

Kitchen — Keep hands and utensils clean so bacteria doesn't spread from one food to another.

Cooking — Cook food to 160° F or 70° C to prevent foodborne illness.

Refrigerating — Never leave perishables unrefrigerated over 2 hours. Put leftovers in small containers.

축가운 휴일과 매일 매일의
식품안전을 위해 아래 지침을 지킵시다

쇼핑	포장이 파손되지 않은 식품을 시십시오 부패하기 쉬운 식품은 곧 냉장하십시오
부엌	손과 식기를 깨끗이 해서 세균이 퍼지지 않도록 합시다
요리	식품중독을 방지하기 위해 하씨 160도 또는 섭씨 70도로 음식을 요리하십시오
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Korean

From USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service

QUELQUES PRINCIPES DE SECURITE ALIMENTAIRE POUR PASSER DE BONNES FETES ET AUSSI POUR LE RESTE DE L'ANNEE

Au marché — Choisissez les articles dont l'emballage est en bon état. Réfrigérez dès que possible les produits périssables.

Dans la cuisine — Lavez-vous les mains et lavez les ustensiles pour que les bactéries ne passent pas d'un aliment à l'autre.

La cuisine — Faites cuire les aliments à 160 degrés fahrenheit ou 70 degrés centigrade pour éviter les maladies qui proviennent des aliments mal cuits.

Le réfrigérateur — Ne laissez jamais de produits périssables sans réfrigération pendant plus de 2 heures. Placez les restes dans de petits récipients dans le réfrigérateur.

French

PARA TODAS SUS FESTIVIDADES Y ACTIVIDADES DURANTE EL AÑO, INGA EN CUENTA LAS SIGUIENTES REGLAS SOBRE EL MANEJO DE LAS COMIDAS.

AL COMPRAR — Compre la comida en envases que no estén dañados. Refrigere rápidamente aquello que se daña con facilidad.

EN LA COCINA — Mantenga limpias sus manos y utensilios de manera que la bacteria no pase de un alimento a otro.

AL COCINAR — Cocine a 160° o 70 C. para prevenir enfermedades.

AL REFRIGERAR — Nunca de fuera del refrigerador por más de 2 horas aquellos alimentos que se dañan con facilidad. Guarde lo que sobre en recipientes pequeños.

爲了愉快假日及日常飲食安全起見，
請採用這些食物安全指南

購買食物時 挑選包裝完整、無損壞的食品。易壞的食物應儘快冷藏。

廚房內 雙手及各種廚具要保持清潔，防止細菌在各食物中傳播蔓延。

烹飪時 食物應煮沸至華氏160度或攝氏70度，以防食物中帶有病菌。

冷藏 請將食物應儘快冷藏，切勿置諸室溫（冰箱）外超過兩小時之久。用小型的容器盛裝剩餘食物，貯藏於冰箱裡。

Chinese

Spanish

FOOD NEWS FOR CONSUMERS/HOLIDAYS 1990

A Month-by-Month

1991

Food Safety Tips Calendar

JANUARY

For Safe Soups

- Refrigerate soups and stews within 2 hours of cooking, dividing them into small, shallow containers for quick cooling.
- Keep leftovers refrigerated no more than 4 days.
- Reheat to *boiling* before serving.

FEBRUARY

Frozen Canned Goods?

- Don't store canned food in unheated areas. If cans do freeze, serve contents immediately, heating thoroughly.
- Discard cans that have frozen and then thawed outside of a refrigerator.
- Never use the outdoors as a spare freezer or refrigerator.

MARCH

For Slow-Cooker Success

- Choose foods with a high liquid content like soup, stew or chili for crock-pot cooking safety.
- Use *refrigerated* foods, NOT frozen meats or poultry.
- Use small, uniform-sized pieces of meat or poultry. Don't overload the pot.
- Start the slow-cooker on "high". Turn to "low" when leaving the house.

APRIL

Egg Safety

- Eggs *must* be thoroughly cooked. Avoid raw or undercooked egg dishes and soft meringues.
- Don't even "taste" while preparing anything like cookie dough that contains raw eggs.
- Hardcooked Easter eggs should be refrigerated until just before the hunt. Discard any eggs that were cracked in the hunt or that the kids didn't find within 2 hours.
- Hardcooked eggs last 7 days in the refrigerator.

MAY

Spring-Clean the Kitchen

- While frozen food stays safe for long periods, the texture and flavor will suffer over time. Generally, use items from the freezer within a year.
- Use an appliance thermometer to check that your refrigerator and freezer are maintaining safe, low temperatures—40° F for the refrigerator, 0° F for the freezer.
- Check the use-by dates on refrigerated foods and don't use them past those dates.

- Commercial low-acid canned goods (meat, poultry, and most vegetables) can be kept 2 to 5 years. Use high-acid canned foods (tomato products, most fruit and fruit juices) within 12 to 18 months. Be sure cans are free of dents, bulges, rust spots or leaks. *Use home-canned goods within a year.*

JUNE

Perfect Picnics

- For a worry-free picnic, keep perishable food—meats, poultry, salads, eggs—in a cooler.
- Coolers should be well insulated and packed with ice or a freeze-pack insert. Cold drinks in cans or cartons can also help keep food cold.
- Keep the cooler in the passenger area of the car, not in the hot trunk.
- At the picnic, keep the covered cooler in the shade. Serve food quickly from the cooler and return it fast. *In hot weather, food shouldn't sit out over 1 hour!*

JULY

At the Grill

- Marinate foods only in the refrigerator. Reserve a portion of the marinade, before raw meat is placed in it, for use later in basting or as a dip for cooked food.

- To avoid flare-ups and charred food when grilling, remove visible fat from meat.
- Cook food completely at the picnic site. Partial cooking ahead can be risky.
- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly—to an internal temperature of at least 160° F. Meat should not be pink and juices should run clear.
- Serve food from the grill on a clean platter, not one that has raw, possibly contaminated meat juices on it.

AUGUST

Camp Cuisine

- If you'll be without a refrigerator, take only those perishable foods that you can use early in the trip.
- For backpacking, try some of the new dehydrated and dried foods. Many camp foods need no refrigeration.
- Boil stream and river water for 15 minutes, then let stand until cool before use.
- Thoroughly cook meat from any game or fish caught in the wild. Wild animals often carry parasites.

SEPTEMBER

Back-To-School-Food

- To keep lunches safe and cold, include a cold or frozen item in lunch bags. Freezer-gels or frozen juices in cartons work well.
- To keep sandwiches safe, freeze them ahead. They'll defrost by lunch time. Coarse-textured bread is best. Add mayo and veggies at lunch.
- Wash out lunchboxes or totes every night. Don't reuse paper lunch bags.
- College students, cooking in the dorm, should heat foods in the microwave oven until thoroughly hot and steaming.

num wrap, followed by newspapers and a towel. On arrival, reheat to 165° F and serve within 2 hours.

NOVEMBER

Talking Turkey

- For best quality, use a frozen turkey within 1 year.
- Fresh turkeys should be stored in the home refrigerator only 1 to 2 days.
- Thaw frozen turkey in the refrigerator. Figure 24 hours for every 5 pounds of bird.
- Stuff the turkey just before cooking. Cook completely at one time to an internal temperature of 180° F. Set the oven temperature no lower than 325°.

OCTOBER

Fall Festivities

- Party food prepared ahead can be frozen in small containers. Reheat in the microwave for serving at party time.
- Bringing something to the party? A thermos can transport hot soups or stews. Rinse thermos with boiling water right before use, and heat foods to boiling before filling.
- To transport a thoroughly cooked casserole, wrap the hot dish in several layers of alumi-

DECEMBER

Holiday Buffets

- Don't leave perishable food on a buffet table over 2 hours. Keep buffet portions small. Replenish often with fresh platters.
- Place plates of cold food on beds of ice to retain the chill.
- Chafing dishes or heated serving trays should hold hot foods at 140° F or above.

—Susan Templin

A clip-out wallet calendar and Hotline number card.

January 1991							February 1991							March 1991							April 1991							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
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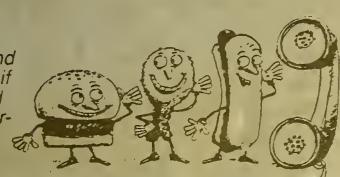
Hotline

Professional home economists will answer your questions about proper handling of meat and poultry, how to tell if it is safe to eat, and how to better understand meat and poultry labels.

To hear the latest food safety information, call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline

1-800-535-4555

10:00 am-4:00 pm Eastern Time
(Washington, DC 447-3331)



Learning the Right "Touch" For Food Safety

by Dianne Durant



USDA home economist Marilyn Johnston is used to teaching classes on food safety, but this one is just a little different. In this class, Marilyn talks about the *feel* of different cookware and the *smells* of foods. Why? Her class members are blind.

People with visual handicaps are becoming increasingly independent. And for the 80,000 blind and 14 million visually impaired in this country, learning safe food handling is an important aspect of learning to care for themselves.

Recently, Marilyn Johnston volunteered to teach food safety to this group of blind and visually impaired people at the District of Columbia's Lighthouse for the Blind.

Her session focused on safe food handling using microwave ovens, a key kitchen tool for the visually impaired. Many micro-

waves are available with programming panels and instruction booklets in braille, and because microwaves cook without heat, burn dangers are reduced.

Points to remember.

"To cook thoroughly with the microwave and avoid problems with foodborne bacteria, keep in mind five concepts: cover, stir, rotate, re-arrange and standing time," Marilyn told her class.

Cover foods with plastic wrap or dish tops made for the microwave. *Stir* dishes like stew during cooking. Plates of food need to be *rotated*, even when your microwave has a carousel. Food items should be *re-arranged* on the plate during cooking. Finally, food must stand a while after being microwaved. This is *standing time*.

For Further Information

For companies providing braille cookbooks and microwaves, write:

Vision Foundation, Inc.
818 Mt. Auburn Street
Watertown, Mass. 02171
1-617-926-4232.

Microwave cookbooks in braille and listening tapes are available free through a lending network run by:

The National Library Service
for the Blind and Physically
Handicapped
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20542.



Microwaving Chicken Kiev and Pears in Wine Sauce



Covering to prevent cold spots. Marilyn shows how plastic wrap aids in microwaving. Covering foods, she says, helps ensure thorough microwave cooking and prevents "cold spots," where foodborne bacteria can survive to cause illness.



Venting to prevent steam burns when food is done. Class members check "venting" of pears in wine sauce. To prevent too much steam from accumulating (a burn danger), vent the wrap by leaving one corner open.



Microwave defrosting. Never defrost on the kitchen counter. Defrost with the microwave but cook immediately to ensure food safety.



Sudsing away any contamination. Marilyn says all items—like this cutting board—that come into contact with raw meat, poultry or seafood must be thoroughly washed with hot, soapy water before use with other foods.



Great invention—the browning dish. Class members turn browning dish upside down to feel the texture of the heat-producing coating that browns foods, like chicken, without dangerous splatters.



Make sure it's DONE!! After cooking in the microwave, food must stand a while in order to complete cooking.

News Wires

FSIS's New 8-Hour Test for Botulinum Toxin

Since canning gained widespread acceptance in the late 19th century, only one real threat has remained in preserved food—the risk of botulism. Caused by the deadly botulinum neurotoxin, botulism poisoning can send victims to the hospital, cause permanent nerve damage and even cause death.

Today, however, due to a 3-year effort by a Beltsville, Md. team of FSIS microbiologists—Dr. Charles Lattuada, Dr. Wei Hwa Lee, Ms. Geri Ranson and Dr. Elisa Elliot—scientists may soon be able to routinely screen suspect foods within 8 hours.

This represents a major advance in public health protection since anyone exposed to botulinum toxin needs immediate medical help, and that determination must be made as quickly as possible.

While the new test is still undergoing evaluation, Dr. Lattuada explains that it is a significant step ahead of the traditional mouse test which, while accurate, is slower and more cumbersome as samples must be shipped to laboratories with test mice.

How does the new test for the presence of botulinum toxin work? After specially coating a clear plastic test plate (see photo), microbiologists pour in an extract from the suspect food. The test plate is then coated with additional reactive substances. If botulinum toxin is present in the sample food, the clear liquid in the test plate turns yellow.

"The new test detects botulinum toxins at extremely low

levels and identifies the type of toxin," says Dr. Lattuada. The test identifies *Clostridium botulinum* toxins A, B, E or F, those that cause illness in humans.

The test results can be read by a computer. This is a further help since the computer can "see" minute color variations not obvious to the human eye. This is critical in evaluating food samples since the more intense the yellow tone, the higher the toxin levels.

For further information, contact Hedy Ohringer, FSIS Information Office, 1-202-447-9113.

—Mary Ann Parmley

FDA Approves Poultry Irradiation

On May 1, 1990, the Food and Drug Administration approved the use of irradiation on uncooked poultry to control microbial pathogens such as salmonella, campylobacter and yersinia that cause foodborne illnesses.

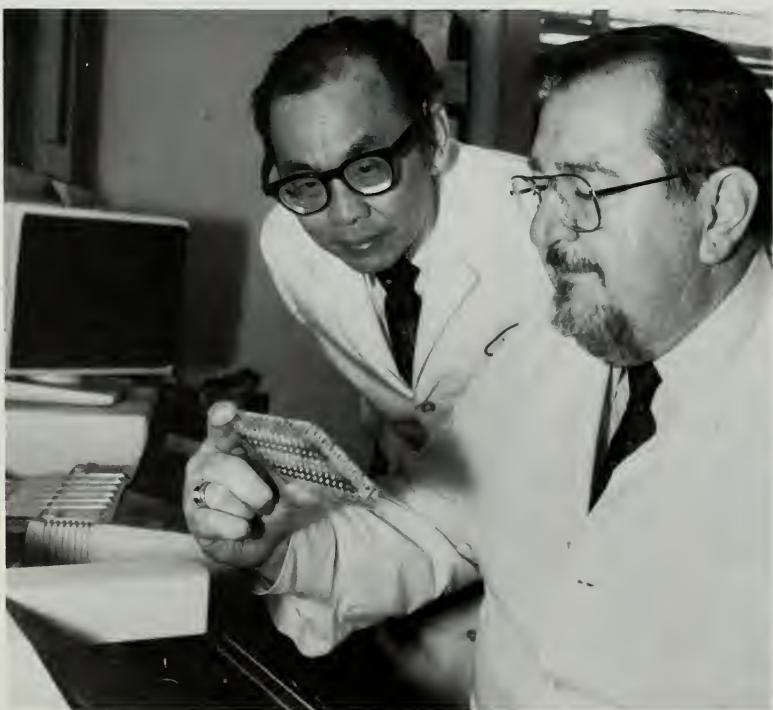
FDA says it considers irradiation safe and effective for killing bacteria in chicken, turkey and other fresh and frozen poultry. FDA further states there is no evidence that irradiation at the appropriate level (150 to 300 kilorads) would be hazardous.

The irradiation of food has been studied for the past 40 years.

Irradiation has been previously approved for trichina control in pork, and is currently used for insect disinfestation of grains, spices and wheat flour, and to control sprouting in potatoes and onions.

More than 30 countries use food irradiation technologies to help ensure food safety, and 13 countries have approved the use of irradiation on poultry.

Any irradiated poultry prod-



Lee and Lattuada inspect test plate.

ucts destined to appear on American grocery shelves would be clearly labeled as irradiated.

While at this point poultry processors appear uninterested in the commercial applications of irradiation, USDA feels it is a viable approach to the control of foodborne illness and that producers should have the methodology available to them.

For further information, contact: Susan Rehe, FSIS Information Office, 1-202-447-9113.

—Liz Lapping

USDA Offers *Salmonella enteritidis* Fact Sheets

Salmonella enteritidis (SE) is a virulent bacteria currently causing great concern both in the United States and internationally.

Its presence in eggs has helped to triple human outbreaks of this serious infection in the United States over the past decade.

SE can spread to humans through eggs, poultry or other contaminated foods. Research shows that infected hens can pass the salmonella bacteria from their bodies into the eggs they produce.

In an effort to stop the geographic spread of SE, which has been moving from the Northeast into other parts of the country, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced a program to test breeding flocks and eggs to be sure they are free from SE infection.

In conjunction with this program, APHIS has introduced two factsheets to educate the public on SE:

- "*Salmonella enteritidis — Pathogen of People and Animals*" provides a complete overview of SE—the threat to humans, how SE spreads, how it is detected and controlled and methods for disease prevention.

- "*Salmonella enteritidis — Laboratory Identification*," designed for laboratory scientists, veterinarians and technicians, is a detailed look at how labs identify a particular serotype of SE and the laboratory tests used.

For more information or to order brochures, contact the:

Salmonella Enteritidis

Taskforce

USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services

Presidential Building, Rm. 738
6525 Belcrest Road
Hyattsville, Md. 20782
Telephone: 1-301-436-4363.

—Liz Lapping

Enforcement Actions

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Compliance Program investigates violations of federal meat and poultry inspection laws. Those products found in violation can be seized, detained or voluntarily recalled. These include products not labeled clearly and those that have added ingredients that should not be there. Companies that violate the law are subject to criminal, administrative or civil actions. Here are some recent actions:

PRODUCT: Hams.
COMPANY: Sandy Mac, Inc., Pennsauken, Pa.
ACTION: Fined \$2 million, the largest fine in USDA history.
VIOLATION: Adding water to hams to increase their weight and retail profitability, and permitting employees to bribe federal inspectors to ignore the adulteration.

PRODUCT: Corned beef rounds.
COMPANY: Boyle's Famous Corned Beef Co., Inc., Kansas City, Mo.
ACTION: Fined \$50,000.
VIOLATION: Adding water to corned beef rounds to increase their weight and retail profitability, and selling and transporting these products.

PRODUCT: Various pork products.
COMPANY: A.L. Duck, Jr., Inc., Zuni, Va.
ACTION: Withdrawal of inspection services for one year if further violations of federal or state meat laws occur. Plant supervisor must divest himself of financial and other connections with the plant for 10 years.
VIOLATION: Preparing, selling and transporting uninspected pork products and misrepresenting these products as having received federal inspection.

PRODUCT: Canned hams.
COMPANY: Jack Greenburg, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.
ACTION: Withdrawal of inspection services for two years if further violations of federal or state meat inspection laws occur.
VIOLATION: Selling putrid and decomposed hams unfit for human consumption.

FSIS =

TAKING THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

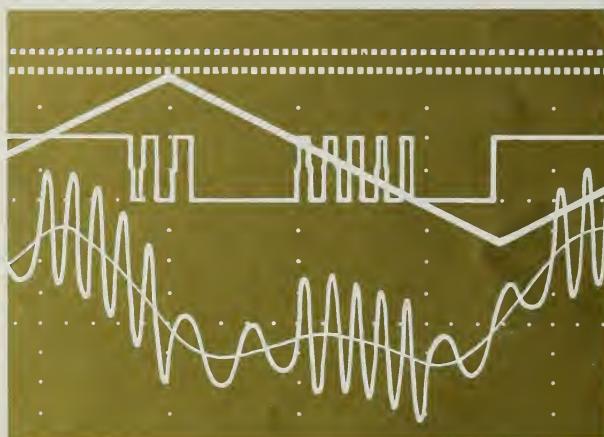
Science is playing an increasingly important role in the work of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. So in the next issue of *Food News*, we'll be looking at how FSIS is taking the scientific approach to meet a number of challenges. You'll find out:

- How new tests are being developed to identify residues and

bacteria in meat and poultry products

- What new training methods are being used to prepare our workforce to solve the food safety problems of the 1990s
- And why consumer education itself requires research to be successful.

All this and more coming up in the Winter issue!



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